

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Columbus voyage to Americas opened door to social progress  
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 84/NO. 29 JULY 27, 2020

## Help us put the Socialist Workers Party on the ballot!

BY RACHELE FRUIT

SHREVEPORT, La. — “After looking at the *Militant*, I really want to see the Socialist Workers Party on the ballot in Louisiana,” Keri Tankersley, a 24-year-old student in Monroe, an hour and a half east of here, told party campaigners. “What can I do to help?”

Tankersley agreed to be an elector for Alyson Kennedy and Malcolm Jarrett, SWP candidates for president and vice president. Campaigners fanned out across the state July 11-13, recruiting the eight electors needed to get on the ballot, one from each congressional district and two at-large.

The Socialist Workers Party is the only party running in the 2020 elections that campaigns in defense of the interests of working people. In addition to Louisiana, the party is already on the ballot in Colorado and is fighting to win ballot status in five other states.

As the capitalist economic and social crisis deepens, the SWP is winning a broad hearing building support for working-class struggles like the strike by shipbuilders in Bath, Maine; calling for an emergency government-funded public works program to provide millions of jobs; for workers taking control of production where they work; and the need for working people to build their own party, a labor party.

In southwest Shreveport, SWP cam-  
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## Workers fight boss attacks on jobs, wages, conditions



AP photo/Robert F. Bukaty

June 22 picket at Bath, Maine, shipyard. Strike is solid and winning solidarity from other unionists and workers in the region in face of company’s union-busting “last and final” offer.

### No worker has to die on the job! For workers control of production

*Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for president, issued the following statement July 15. Malcolm Jarrett is the party’s candidate for vice president.*

### SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STATEMENT

A fight by workers and our unions to wrest control of production and safety from the bosses is more sharply posed today as they press to pack  
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### Workers’ problem today is crisis of capitalism, not a virus

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Speedup and dangerous working conditions enforced by bosses at Los Angeles Apparel and at nearby meat-packing plants highlight the employers contempt for workers’ safety and lives. Four workers at L.A. Apparel have recently died from coronavirus and over 300 working there have been infected.

In a June 26 visit to this south L.A. site, inspectors cited “flagrant violations” of infection control measures, including the use of makeshift card-  
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## Bath shipyard strike against union busting needs support!

BY VED DOOKHUN

In the largest labor conflict in the country, over 4,300 shipbuilding workers, members of Machinists Local S6, at the Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine, continue to win support and solidarity from area unions and local businesses as their strike enters its fourth week.

The bosses have refused all further negotiations with the union, insisting their “last and final” concession contract is the best it can get. The contract would allow the bosses to continue increasing the number of nonunion contract workers in the shipyard, strike blows at seniority job protection, and force workers to pay more for health care.

The key issue is contract workers used to threaten shipbuilders’ jobs and the strength of the union.

Local S6 organized a Solidarity Cornhole Tournament and Chili and Ribs Cook-Off outside the union hall July 10 that drew some 200 of the local’s members, their families and supporters.

In an attempt to get production going and to increase pressure on workers on strike, Bath Iron Works has been recruiting subcontractors to scab and urges workers to quit the union and cross the picket line.

“This isn’t new, the company has  
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## Join protests for prosecution of cops who killed Breonna Taylor!

BY JACQUIE HENDERSON

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — It’s been four months since Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old emergency room technician, was killed in a hail of bullets by cops breaking into her apartment in a late night “no-knock” raid here.

Outrage over her death has become a prominent part of hundreds of demonstrations against police brutality and killings in cities and towns nationwide, and around the world. But unlike in the case of George Floyd, where charges were brought within 10 days against the four cops who killed him in Minneapolis May 26, none of the cops involved in killing Taylor have been arrested.

“All this time and still no charges against any of them,” Katrina Curry, Taylor’s cousin, told the *Militant* July 10. “We have been working so hard on this and a lot of people have spoken up, but still there



Reuters/Bryan Woolston

June 27 protest in Louisville, Kentucky, demands cops who killed Breonna Taylor be arrested, charged.

are no moves toward justice.”

Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron, who is now in charge of handling the killing, told the media July 13  
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## Defense of free speech, debate met with slander and threats of reprisal

BY TERRY EVANS

A letter to *Harper’s* magazine by 150 writers and artists speaking out for freedom of speech and debate came under immediate attack by radical purveyors of political correctness who believe that the suppression of “improper” views is required today. The venomous reaction to “A Letter on Justice and Open Debate,” in fact proved the writers’ point.

Attacks on free speech — no matter where they come from — always end up being used against those looking for a working-class road forward in the fight against capitalist exploitation and oppression.

Signers of the letter, already on *Harper’s* website and scheduled to appear in the October print edition, include feminist Gloria Steinem, novelist Salman Rushdie, jazz musician Wynton Marsalis, liberal *New York Times* columnist Michelle Goldberg and conservative Francis Fukuyama. After an obligatory condemnation of

President Donald Trump’s “threat to democracy,” the writers point out that “the free exchange of information and ideas, the lifeblood of a liberal society, is daily becoming more constricted.”

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### Inside

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#### —On the picket line—

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Montreal longshoremen strike over unsafe schedules 4







# Nurses on strike in Joliet: ‘We can set an example’

BY DAN FEIN

JOLIET, Ill. — Chanting, “What do we want? Safe staffing! When do we want it? Now!” some 200 striking nurses, their families and supporters rallied outside the AMITA Health Saint Joseph Medical Center here July 12. The action was preceded by a caravan of over 100 cars and motorcycles that circled the struck hospital.

The action occurred a day after the nurses voted 393-154 to reject the hospital’s latest contract offer.

The 720 members of the Illinois Nurses Association began their strike July 4 over bosses’ demands for a wage freeze over the three-year contract, elimination of sick pay and no increase in staffing. They had been working without a contract since May 9.

While the latest company offer backed off ending sick pay and would give a 2% wage increase for the last two years of the contract, it refuses to meet the strikers’ main demand.

“The proposed company contract addresses sick time but not our core demand for more staffing,” Sarah Corless, a nurse at AMITA for four years, told the *Militant*. “They just promise to do more hiring, but nothing in writing.”

Striker Laura Basco, with five years at AMITA, said, “We can be an example to other nurses who have the same problem with understaffing. The hospital only cares about money.”

Sharon Marasco, a nurse for 22 years, commented, “We feel closer bonds among ourselves by walking the picket

line together. At work we are too busy to get to know one another.”

The nurses have been winning solidarity from other unions in the area, including from the International Association of Fire Fighters and electrical workers who have walked the picket lines.

“It’s great to see the support we have from the people in the community,” striking nurse Ami Ormet said after the rally. “We are fighting for them as well as ourselves.”

Messages of support can be sent to Illinois Nurses Association, 910 W. Van Buren St., Room 502, Chicago, IL 60607.



Militant/Dan Fein

Striking Illinois nurses picket AMITA Health Center July 12 for better conditions, more staff.

## Shipyard strike against union busting needs support!

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been sending out notices since around the time of the ‘hammer down actions,’” striker Jaimie Bellefleur told the *Militant* July 12 after distributing strike benefits to workers for six hours. “They knew a strike was coming.”

Bellefleur was referring to how workers stopped work every hour for one minute and hammered on steel on the plant floor. This went on for the two weeks leading up to the strike, and helped unify the workers and strengthen their resolve to stop the bosses from pushing their takeaway contract down their throat. Eighty-seven percent of the local’s members voted to strike.

The bosses are banking on economic

pressure to divide the local. And they hope to play younger workers with less union experience against plant veterans who are concerned about defending seniority in jobs. So far they’ve failed.

Andrew Reeves, one new member of the union, a sandblaster, told the *Portland Press Herald* on the picket line that he backed the strike and those who had fought for years to win the benefits they all enjoy. “Without them, I don’t have this job,” he said. “The only reason I’m making a decent wage is because of this union.”

“We are fighting for our future,” Bellefleur told the *Militant*. “For the most part, people are in it for the long haul.”

She said that area workers have

joined their picket lines and financial contributions are coming in. Unionists, including members of Postal Mail Handlers Local 301, and others in the community have walked the picket line. A \$2,640 donation came from International Association of Machinists Local 264 and \$2,000 from the Maine Education Association. The McAdams law firm sent in \$1,000.

More is needed! Solidarity donations can be made through PayPal at <https://www.paypal.me/LocalLodgeS6>

**Bosses press workers to cross line**

In a notice posted online, the local advises union members not to fall for company propaganda and cross the picket line. Some 20 workers appear to have done so. The union encourages strikers who are having trouble finding work to check in with the local, which is handling job requests from sympathetic area businesses.

Strikers get \$150 a week as long as they sign up for one four-hour shift of strike duty. The picket line is staffed 24/7.

Bath Iron Works, which makes destroyers for the U.S. Navy, is owned by General Dynamics. A union strike update on its website July 13 points out that while the bosses say they need concessions to keep going, General Dynamics gave “nearly \$2.9 billion to their stockholders in 2018 alone.”

“Power concedes nothing without a demand,” the update concludes, quoting well-known 19th century abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass. “It never did and it never will.”

## US execution: ‘Brutal weapon in hands of capitalist rulers’

BY ROY LANDERSEN

The U.S. government carried out the first federal execution in 17 years July 14, fast tracking the killing of Daniel Lee, in Terre Haute, Indiana. The fact that he was strapped on a gurney with an IV needle in his arm for four hours awaiting court decisions on his fate underlined the cruelty of the state’s determination to put him to death. His lawyers were not told of his death until after the execution.

By a 5-4 majority, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled shortly after 2 a.m. that

they wouldn’t consider the objections because they were too “last-minute.” The court also overrode arguments that the use of the barbiturate pentobarbital would cause “extreme pain and needless suffering” akin to drowning. Observers at the execution reported Lee’s breathing did become labored, and after his chest stopped moving his lips turned blue and his fingers ashy.

The execution was opposed by Earlene Peterson, the 81-year-old mother of one of Lee’s victims, as well as her daughter and granddaughter. They asked for a postponement, saying they wanted to attend, but feared traveling to Indiana because of the coronavirus outbreak. They planned to use their attendance to speak out against the death penalty.

“Just 10 minutes passed between the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals revoking the last outstanding objection stopping Lee’s execution, in an order at 7:36 a.m., and the curtain in the execution chamber being pulled back at 7:46 a.m. to reveal Lee strapped to a gurney,” Reuters reported.

Public support for this barbaric practice has been declining for years among working people. Still the death penalty has been defended as a federal law by Democratic and Republican administrations alike. While President Donald Trump calls for extending its use, it was President Bill Clinton who expanded the number of crimes to which it applies, some 60 additional offenses.

The Justice Department has scheduled two more executions for later

this next week.

Reflecting the shift against this barbarity, 32 states have abolished the death penalty or haven’t carried out an execution in over a decade. An October 2019 national poll found respondents favored life imprisonment for capital offenses over execution by 60% to 34%.

“Capital punishment is a brutal weapon of terror in the hands of the capitalist rulers, ultimately used to intimidate the working class and its vanguard fighters,” Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for president, said July 14. “The Socialist Workers Party fights for its complete abolition.”

## More coverage to come on Asarco strike and the solidarity it won...

BY JOHN STUDER

The article “Asarco Miners End Strike, Look to Continue to Fight” in the last issue of the *Militant* wasn’t able to do full justice to the determined battle by the big majority of the copper miners to defend their unions, fight for higher pay, and defend union-won working conditions against Asarco bosses’ nine-month-long effort to crush them. And it didn’t give enough of a picture of the breadth of solidarity the strikers got from workers across the country. If you look back over the extensive coverage of the strike in the *Militant* you get a feel for this. It sets an example for workers to build on.

One rail worker representing a Se-

attle local visited the pickets, brought greetings from his local, took reports back and raised about \$2,000 for the fight. Steelworkers from Chicago, refinery unionists from Los Angeles, Walmart workers from many cities, the Nal-Nishii Labor Federation from the Navajo Nation, International Longshore and Warehouse Union retirees’ locals in the Seattle area, unions in Australia and Colombia and more sent tens of thousands in donations and expressions of support that made a real difference.

The *Militant* will run a follow-up article in the next few weeks to describe this important battle and the lessons we can draw for future battles we know are coming.

### ‘Stimulus’ appeal

An update on the Socialist Workers Party special “stimulus” appeal will appear in next week’s issue of the *Militant*.

## —CALENDAR—

### ILLINOIS

#### Chicago

**Celebrate 67th Anniversary of Opening Guns of Cuban Revolution — the Attack on Moncada Military Barracks.** Sun., July 26, 6 p.m. Donation: \$10. *United Electrical Workers Union hall, 37 S. Ashland Ave. Sponsored by Chicago Cuba Coalition.*

### NEW YORK

#### New York

**USA out of Puerto Rico! El Barrio Freedom March.** In the spirit of Rafael Cancel Miranda, march for Puerto Rican Independence. Sat., July 25, 1 p.m. *Assemble at E. 125th St. and Lexington Avenue, march to Julia de Burgos Mosaic on E. 106th St. Sponsored by ProLibertad.*



# Help put SWP on the ballot!

Continued from front page

paigned met Kimberly Hatfield and her companion, Rasheed Norman. “Right now, as far as jobs, people need higher wages,” Norman said. “All my friends and family are working for \$7.25 an hour, and no one can pay bills on that. I make \$100 a day, but it’s hard work in the hot sun all day, doing landscaping.”

“What do you think we should do?” asked Gerardo Sánchez, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate from Texas, campaigning for the presidential ticket.

“We could force them to raise the pay if we all stopped going to work,” Norman said. “If you have a union, you can negotiate schedules, working conditions, and they can’t do whatever they want to you.”

“Even where we don’t yet have a union, workers can unite and act together like a union,” said Sánchez, who works at Walmart, where workers also haven’t yet organized a union.

The 21-year-old Norman, who is Black, said that he has been stopped by cops several times for no reason, leading to a discussion on how to end police brutality.

Tommie McGlothen Jr., a 44-year-old Black man, died after he was beaten by Shreveport police April 5. The beating, captured on cellphone videos by witnesses, was covered up for two months by the cops. McGlothen’s family and the Shreveport NAACP are demanding the firing of all officers involved in his death or the cover-up.

## Join fight against cop brutality

Kennedy, Jarrett and SWP candidates across the country have been active in many of today’s fights against police brutality. They explain that protests demanding the prosecution of the cops can push back police violence. But the capitalist rulers will never stop using the cops and their criminal “justice system” to defend their power and profits. To end police brutality, they explain, workers need to fight in their millions to end capitalist rule and bring to power a workers and farmers government.

Sánchez showed Norman *The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record* by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes, which details why the prison population saw its biggest growth in U.S. history under the Democratic administration of Bill Clinton. Norman got the book and a subscription to the *Militant*, and Hatfield signed up to be an elector.

Irina McAllister, a retired worker from New Orleans, also signed up. “The SWP is the only working-class alternative. The party offers a real working-class program that you can read about every week in the *Militant* newspaper,” she said.

While in New Orleans, Socialist Workers Party campaigners met with a dozen striking sanitation workers and their supporters to extend solidarity and to discuss how to win more support for their fight. Employed by a New Orleans subcontractor, the “hoppers,” as they are called, have been on strike since May 5.

## ‘Need union to stand up to bosses’

Strike leader Darnell Harris thanked the campaign supporters for coming by to learn more about their fight. “Without a union I don’t see how it’s possible for workers to effectively stand up to the companies,” he said. “We get \$10.25 per hour, the minimum in the city. We get no benefits. They had us working for 80 hours per week and we still couldn’t turn overtime down.”

“Work clothes? We don’t get any — even though we spend all week throwing garbage in the hot sun,” Harris said. “Work gloves? A few of us who line up extra early might get some cloth garden gloves, if we’re lucky. Sick pay? Don’t even ask. These are some of the reasons why a union matters so much to us.”

Several workers leafed through photos in the book *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by Barnes, including one of the 1968 Memphis sanitation strike where picketers carried signs saying “I am a man,” a slogan the strikers have put on their picket signs.



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

From left, Gerardo Sánchez, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate from Texas; Haley Swims and Keri Tankersley, electors in Louisiana for SWP presidential ticket; and Rachele Fruit, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate from Georgia. “I really want to see the SWP on the ballot,” Tankersley said.

The Socialist Workers Party has run a presidential slate in every election since 1948. In Vermont last month, campaigners signed up the electors needed to get on the ballot, after the state government suspended petitioning requirements because their shutdown orders due to coronavirus made them impossible.

## Join campaign to put SWP on ballot

In Washington state, the SWP successfully placed Henry Dennison on the ballot for governor after the state waived petitioning and filing fee requirements because of the lockdown there. The campaign and its attorney are urging the state government to do the same for the party’s presidential slate, and is campaigning to tell workers about the party and its fight to get on the ballot.

Government-enforced restrictions imposed under the banner of combating coronavirus have made it virtually impossible to meet petitioning requirements in many other states where the SWP has been on the ballot for decades, including in New Jersey and Minnesota, and in Tennessee, where the party has been on the ballot five times since 1976.

In those states the campaign has retained legal counsel and urged state of-

ficials to waive the requirements. It is organizing support from fellow workers, supporters of political rights, anyone who wants to see the working-class alternative on the ballot.

In Washington, D.C., Omari Musa is the Socialist Workers Party candidate for delegate to the House of Representatives. District officials lowered the requirement for ballot status from 3,000 signatures to 250. Campaign supporters had already collected 250 signatures as of July 15, toward their goal of over 500, more than double the requirement. Stepped-up campaigning is set for the weekend of July 18, to complete the drive. Anyone who wants to volunteer can contact the D.C. campaign at (202) 536-5080.

In many states Democratic Party officials are doing anything possible to keep the SWP off the ballot, fearing it could win votes and threaten their party’s chances in 2020. In New York, Gov. Andrew Cuomo issued an executive order significantly raising the number of signatures to put independent parties on the ballot, to 30,000.

Steve Warshell contributed to this article from New Orleans.

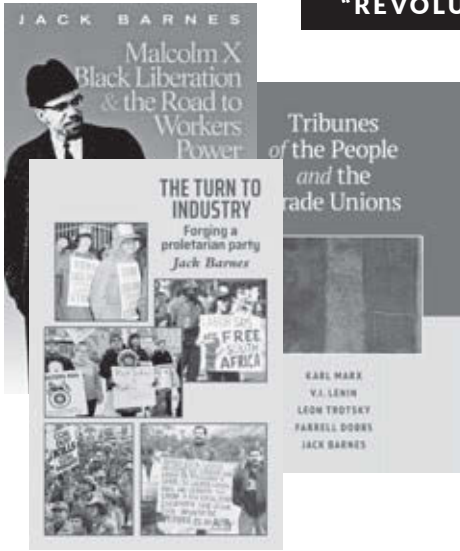
## MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

### WASHINGTON, D.C.

Meet the Socialist Workers Party Candidates. Speakers: Alyson Kennedy and Malcolm Jarrett, SWP candidates for president and vice president; Omari Musa, SWP candidate for D.C. Delegate to U.S. Congress. Sat., July 18. Reception, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7 p.m. Donation: \$5. 7603 Georgia Ave. NW Suite #300. Tel.: (202) 536-5080.

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### Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power

by Jack Barnes

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# Montreal longshoremen strike over unsafe schedules

BY PIERRE-LUC FILION

MONTREAL — Over 1,000 longshoremen at the port here, members of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 375, carried out a 40-hour strike beginning July 2 against Montreal Gateway Terminals Partnership bosses. They targeted the Cast and Racine terminals, shutting down 30% of port operations.

The workers, who have a lengthy list of demands, have been without a union contract since December 2018. A central issue is scheduling. Strikers told this *Militant* worker-correspondent that they are forced to work for 19 days straight on call, followed by only two days off.

“There are many similarities between your fight and our strike for safety last November,” this worker-correspondent, a former Canadian National rail worker told Local 375 union President Martin LaPierre on the picket line. “Uncertain and changing schedules means fatigue, health and safety hazards and difficulties having family time and a social life.”

“They try to say it is the workers who are the bad guys, but they make profits on our backs,” said LaPierre.

Ten years ago, the port bosses locked out the workers after the union authorized a strike following an 18-month impasse in contract talks. The Maritime Employers Association has tried twice — unsuccessfully — to get Ottawa to take away the workers’ right to strike by declaring their jobs are an “essential service.”

Strikers on the line also discussed the need for workers to have our own party, a labor party, based on a mo-

bilized labor movement that fights for what working people need. “I think having such a labor party is necessary and possible, we are the only ones who know what is in our interest,” striker Janico Tremblay said.

Many drivers honked in solidarity as they drove by the picket line.

The short strike was called to put pressure on the bosses without provoking strikebreaking action by the federal government, workers said. After it began, the port bosses began negotiations with union officials, but as of July 8 no results had been announced.

## Correction

In issue no. 27, the article “SWP 2020 Campaign Presents Fighting Working-Class Program,” should have said Aug. 5 is the filing deadline to submit signatures to place Omari Musa on the ballot for District of Columbia Delegate to Congress. In the same issue, the article “Destruction of Statues Seeks to Erase History We Need to Know,” should have said the march in 2000 demanding the Confederate flag be taken down from the state Capitol occurred in Columbia, South Carolina.



# Attack on jobs, work conditions

**Continued from front page**  
board barriers between workers. The following day inspectors closed the plant.

These conditions and similar conditions elsewhere show the urgent need for a fight by those who work to control all aspects of production — from safety precautions, sanitary facilities, line speeds and break times, and to take decisions on these questions out of the hands of profit-hungry company owners. The bosses’ organization of production is the deadliest threat to workers’ health, safety and lives.

Workers at nine industrial sites, five of them meatpacking plants in south L.A., were struck by similar outbreaks of the disease in May. The largest of these was at the Smithfield Foods-owned Farmer John plant of 1,837 workers. Months earlier a government agency had given meatpacking plant bosses the green light to increase line speeds, pushing workers in the plants into closer proximity in order to ramp up production.

As the capitalist crisis deepens working people are organizing to stand up to

the bosses here and around the world. Thousands of shipyard workers in Bath, Maine, have been on strike since June 22 against bosses’ attempts to replace union members with contract workers and attack seniority protections in order to deepen their attacks on wages and conditions. Some 350 drivers, members of Teamsters Local 25 in Watertown and Everett, Massachusetts, struck Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority’s The Ride program July 12 after bosses tried to cut their health insurance. These struggles need solidarity from working people and our unions.

In Israel, tens of thousands of mainly youthful demonstrators in Tel Aviv July 11 voiced their anger at monthslong delays of promised government aid to the self-employed and small-business owners. Since a government-enforced lockdown, unemployment in the country has risen to 21%.

Some 12,000 protesters converged on Baghdad, Iraq, from the mainly Shiite south of the country July 12, to protest Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi’s decision to halt monthly compensation



AP/Ariel Schalit  
**Tens of thousands protest July 11 in Tel Aviv, Israel, against government’s failure to deliver aid promised to workers classified as self-employed. Sign reads, “Out of touch! We’re fed up!”**

payments from the government to thousands who were previously imprisoned by the Saddam Hussein regime. Government security forces the protesters, shooting and killing two people.

The unprecedented downturn in worldwide production and trade, brought on by government shutdowns,

is intensifying competition among workers for jobs. Governments in some places are now reversing steps to reopen commerce and are reimposing shutdowns as fresh outbreaks of the virus surface. Workers face the pressing need to fight for jobs and get us back to work where we can join other workers in the struggles for safer working conditions and better wages.

## Bosses inflict massive job cuts

Nearly 33 million working people in the U.S. have filed claims for jobless benefits as of June 20 — five times the peak of unemployment during the 2008 recession.

Some 1.3 million of those newly out-of-work filed claims the first week of July. An additional million self-employed and other workers applied the same week through the federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program.

In this wave of layoffs, many job cuts are now permanent as more businesses fold. Bosses at United Airlines said 36,000 workers, almost half the workforce, would be furloughed July 8.

As workers organize to defend ourselves in on-the-job skirmishes and strikes we have opportunities to win allies and build support for our common struggles. These actions and the fight for solidarity with them are the foundation for charting a road forward.

## SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STATEMENT

### No one has to die on the job if workers control production

**Continued from front page**  
more of us into plants shoulder to shoulder and crank up the line speeds. They’re driven by the need to beat out their capitalist competition and boost profits. But no worker has to die because of unsafe or unhealthy working conditions! The answer isn’t to shut the plants down, but for workers and our unions to take over control of all aspects of production and reorganize them to meet our needs!

Hundreds of workers became ill from coronavirus in June and July and four died at just two plants in the Los Angeles area — at the Los Angeles Apparel garment shop and Farmer John packinghouse. Similar high — and sometimes deadly — infection rates have struck other meat plants across the country. Long before the virus hit, profit-driven bosses organized production at the expense of workers’ lives and limbs.

In New York, Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who ordered COVID-19 patients to be shuffled into nursing homes, fueled the spread of the disease among the elderly, ensuring the deaths of thousands. Almost half of all coronavirus deaths in the U.S. are in nursing homes, over 80% in some states like New Hampshire!

The only way to change the conditions imposed by the bosses and their government is to rely on the power working people have in their millions. Strikes by shipbuilding workers in Maine, and shop floor skirmishes everywhere over wages and working conditions, point toward what is possible.

A fight by workers and our unions to take control of production would open the door to us setting the line speed, reorganizing conditions on the shop floor, easing off the backbreaking pace of production and taking whatever measures are necessary to defend life and limb. And it shows the possibilities for workers to control *all* aspects of production, to protect ourselves, those who use the products we make, the environment and communities near where we work.

Only by workers taking control of production out of the bosses’ hands can

we make decisions based on what workers need, not what generates profit. As we do so we learn about our own capacities and see more clearly the need for our class and its allies to take command of the entire economy.

To carry out such a fight workers need our own party, a labor party, that builds support for every struggle by workers. By defending those most exploited and oppressed by capital this would strengthen the unity of the working class.

Organizing solidarity with the strike of shipbuilders in Bath, Maine; mobilizing working people to join families fighting for the prosecution of cops who killed their loved ones; and other working-class struggles point in this direction. A labor party would champion the fight for a government-financed public

works program to create jobs, and to fight for an amnesty for the millions of undocumented workers in the U.S. who the bosses superexploit to drive down wages and conditions of all.

The capitalist rulers are capable of any amount of brutality to protect their profits and power — that’s what their cops, courts and barbaric death penalty “serve and protect.” But by challenging their Democratic and Republican parties and the rapacious class rule they protect, it is possible for working people to overturn capitalist rule and replace it with a workers and farmers government.

Join campaigning to get the Socialist Workers Party on the ballot, to get the widest hearing for a working-class political alternative and to build a fighting working-class movement!

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



**August 7, 1995**  
The decision by President Jacques Chirac in France to resume nuclear weapons testing on Moruroa, one of its colonial possessions in the Pacific, should be roundly condemned by working people throughout the world.

Some 50,000 people in Fiji have already signed a petition to the French government, declaring: “The Pacific and its people have been the testing ground for nuclear powers since 1945. Fifty years after the bombing of Hiroshima it is time to stop.”

Imperialist rulers in Australia and New Zealand have seized on opposition to nuclear testing as an opportunity to mount a nationalist campaign against their rivals in Paris.

Workers, farmers and youth should join together in protesting the resumption of French nuclear testing; at the same time we must vigorously oppose every attempt by capitalist rulers to whip up national chauvinism.



**July 31, 1970**  
Black municipal workers in Jackson, Miss., voted to return to work July 21, ending a tumultuous three-week strike. The nearly 800 sanitation and maintenance workers, about one-third of Jackson’s city employees, did not win their central demand, union recognition. However, the city agreed to begin negotiations.

In addition to union recognition and a wage increase, the Black workers had been demanding an anti-discrimination clause, a health plan, a seniority system. The strike is the first of municipal employees in the history of Jackson, and the first time all Black workers have walked off the job in the Deep South demanding union recognition.

The Black municipal employees of Jackson point to the future forces and issues which will emerge in the battles to transform their unions into revolutionary instruments struggling for fundamental changes in society.



**July 28, 1945**  
LOS ANGELES — More than 14,000 persons answered the call of the anti-fascist united front, organized to demonstrate against Gerald L.K. Smith and his fascist movement by attending a meeting at the Olympic auditorium.

A leaflet distributed by the Socialist Workers Party outside the protest meeting called for the formation of anti-fascist committees in every shop, which would enable labor’s forces to be mobilized rapidly for defense against fascist actions.

Additionally, the program urged continuance of the united front which prepared the demonstration and the broadening of the united front by the inclusion of representatives from every local union, organization of mass picket demonstrations against any further meetings Smith may attempt, and the building of an independent labor party.



# Columbus voyage to Americas opened door to social progress

## ‘Discovery of roads of the world was clouded by the enormous crime of conquest’

Over the Fourth of July weekend, a statue of Italian-born seafarer Christopher Columbus, the first European to discover the Americas in 1492, was pulled down and thrown into the Baltimore harbor. Another, presented by Italian-Americans to the city of Waterbury, Connecticut, was beheaded. In Buffalo, New York, and Columbus, Ohio, statues were removed to stop vandals from getting to them. Those who destroyed the statues argued that there was nothing to celebrate about Columbus opening the Americas to Europe.

The two interrelated articles below from the Nov. 8, 1991, issue of the *Militant* are relevant and helpful today in discussing the importance of Europeans finding the link to the Americas. The first is an interview with one of the historic leaders of the Cuban Revolution, Armando Hart, entitled “Faithful

### AN INTERVIEW WITH ARMANDO HART

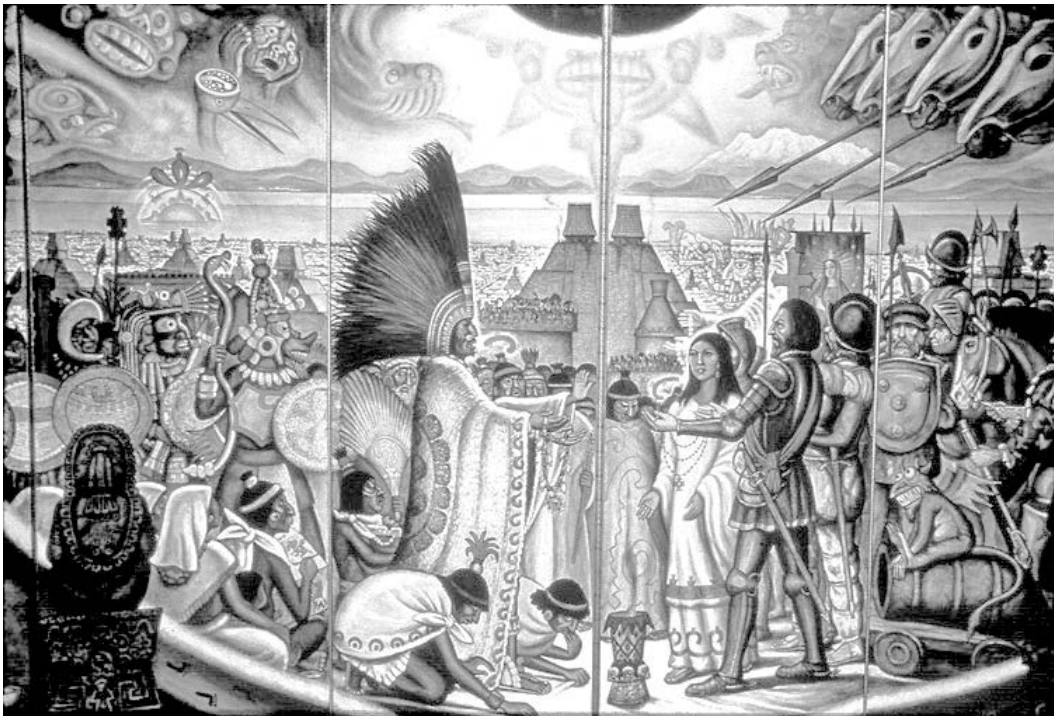
to the Universality that Inspired the Navigators in 1492,” reprinted from the February 1991 *Granma Weekly Review* on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Columbus’ first sighting of the Americas.

As part of marking this event the Cubans erected a memorial statue titled “Encuentro” on the coast of the Bay of Bariay in Holguin province, where Columbus first landed. On a later voyage, he made the first European discovery of the South American continent. These discoveries opened up a door to the advancement of human history as well as a stage of brutal colonial exploitation.

The second article, “A Scientific Approach to Opening of ‘New World,’” by George Buchanan, further explains the history that Hart discusses.

❖

“The great geographical discoveries of the 15th and 16th centuries were historic, but they must be distinguished from the conquest, although the two events were interrelated in practice. The Europeans came with the desire to find new worlds — to discover them for themselves, of course, because these lands were already well known to the indigenous peoples — and above all, with the desire to prove that the world was round. But the Spanish feudal classes took control of the discovery and began to loot, steal and violently carry out the conquest,” observed Armando Hart, Cu-



Folding-screen mural painted in 1976 by Mexican painter Roberto Cueva del Río depicts meeting between Aztec ruler Moctezuma II and Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés some 500 years ago.

ban minister of culture, in an exclusive interview with *Granma Weekly Review*.

“I think that we haven’t had sufficient distance to evaluate the great discoveries of Christopher Columbus and those who came later. I’m referring not to the ‘discovery’ of a continent but rather the discovery of what I have called ‘the roads of the world,’ that is, the route to America and the world, which is something that opened up the way for progress. After the voyages by Magellan and other navigators, it could almost be proved that the earth was round, and the world began to be perceived for what it really is. But this great achievement of the discovery was clouded from the very beginning by the shameful and enormous crime of the conquest.”

**GRANMA:** *Why do you say that the retrograde forces in Spain at the time took advantage of the discovery of America?*

**HART:** The Europeans made these discoveries in order to expand trade and the known world. These events, in and of themselves, were revolutionary events that extended human culture into a dimension unknown until that moment. Since the fall of the Roman empire, 1000 years before, nothing of that magnitude had taken place. Actually, it’s hard to find a more significant event before 1492, and after that date it is comparable to the splitting of the atom and the possibilities for controlling energy unleashed by that accomplishment.

But the feat of the discovery, fueled by nascent European capitalism with its goals of economic expansion, was blemished by unbridled pillage, the es-

sence of the conquest which followed. While the discovery of America signified progress, the conquest was one of the darkest and most shameful stages in the history of humanity.

Those who came to America after the European discoveries, employed methods that were backward in comparison to the capitalism opening up on the old continent. They were methods of physical conquest; they weren’t methods of merchants, nor did their violent irruption into the Americas signify any trade opening. They came in search of the gold and riches of the indigenous people; they annihilated the material and spiritual progress of the native peoples and the dire consequences rebounded back to Spain, blocking the arrival and consolidation of the bourgeois system.

**GRANMA:** *Could we conclude that Spain’s achievement of the discovery ultimately was not beneficial to Spain?*

**HART:** Columbus was a great figure whom I admire, and his voyage promoted the search for new trade routes and, as I said, the confirmation of the notion that the world is round, first explored during ancient times. But the reactionary Spanish classes at that time and the centuries to follow attempted, through the annihilation of the cultures and people of the Americas, to consolidate their essential interests and brought about a great retrocession which was the most disastrous for Spain. The conquest and colonization was carried out with precapitalist methods and forms, and as a result bourgeois development was delayed for centuries.

Events such as the English Industrial Revolution or the French Revolution of 1789, with all its influences and consequences, did not take place in Spain. That is because the continent discovered by the Europeans, which was already well known to its original inhabitants, who had gone there from Asia, helped the existing feudal system to crush or hold back the seeds of the bourgeoisie that were sprouting up at the end of the 15th century, the same seeds that had sparked interest in navigation and the search for the sea route to the Indies starting in the middle of that century, and especially as of the occupation of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453.

Spanish society became wealthy as

a result of the conquest of the Americas, including the discovery of huge deposits of precious metals. The booties were highly coveted and financed the luxuries of the courts and other superfluous expenses. This helped finance the British accumulation of wealth and the rampant development of capitalism there, to the detriment of Spain, which was held back for centuries.

Thus the enlightenment of the bourgeois regime on the [Iberian] Peninsula was delayed for almost five centuries, because it wasn’t until the last 40 years that a bourgeois democratic process began to take place there. Previously there were attempts, efforts were made, but Spain did not become a classic bourgeois society until the present day.

**GRANMA:** *This was a tragic delay which had negative consequences for Spain and other peoples, particularly in the Americas.*

**HART:** That backwardness, that lack of progress, was a result of the conquest but it was not the only one. The conquest had three serious consequences: the strategic backwardness in Spain; the annihilation of the indigenous peoples and cultures; and African slavery. These last two phenomena cannot be accepted or justified in any way, today or ever, and we must reject them wholeheartedly. This is an ethical problem which is still valid today.

If we are able to separate the revolutionary event signified by the Europeans’ great geographical discoveries half a millennium ago from the conquest and the colonization by the Spanish feudal class, we can interpret the history of these 500 years in a scientific and beneficial manner.

**GRANMA:** *You framed the results of the conquest in current ethical terms, but what about the human aspect in those early centuries?*

**HART:** The conquest which followed the discoveries exterminated the Indian population in various countries, brutally altering the way of life there and imposing intense regimens of exploitation, disease and helplessness, and almost from the beginning it brought in African slaves, expanding the slave trade to an appalling extent. These atrocities were maintained for centuries and must be condemned today, and must certainly never be forgotten. We must understand and recognize the meaning of the holocaust perpetrated over several centuries, based on elemental moral principles.

We cannot praise the positive and beautiful aspects of the feat achieved by those early navigators without repudiating the conquest. This is how we can be faithful to the universality that inspired the sailors in 1492 and the highest humanist postulates of civilization. Of course, one could argue that history had to happen that way and that history has its laws. But you could also argue that human beings have a moral conscience, an ethical conscience, and for that reason we hate the Roman emperors who took the Christians to the coliseum to be

clawed to death by the lions and we admire Spartacus.<sup>1</sup>

I don’t think we could admire the example of Father Bartolomé de Las Casas<sup>2</sup> without repudiating Pizarro,<sup>3</sup> whose actions still weigh dramatically on Peruvian society; he caused profound splits among the population, Indians and Spaniards, and caused traumas which persist in that country.

We are now preparing to hold a dignified commemoration of the fifth centennial of those voyages, of the discovery of the roads of the world, and we are happy to do so if such a commemoration can serve to denounce the conquest, at least morally, because today we face modern conquerors who are no less retrograde than the ones 500 years ago.

**GRANMA:** *You are asserting the current validity of those historical circumstances of 500 years ago. Could you be more explicit?*

**HART:** History tends to repeat itself, interestingly enough, although today’s conquerors are different. We must prevent the retrograde classes from taking control, once again, of the great scientific discoveries in order to crush or subjugate humanity. This is a practical as well as a moral problem which offers great lessons today.

In our world, indigenous populations exist which have witnessed the destruction of their cultures. This cannot be forgotten. Often the reactionary classes today take control of the technical achievements, just as the Spanish feudal class did with the geographical discoveries, to the detriment of the bourgeois thinking which had fostered them, and they are trying to consolidate and expand their control now, in the modern world.

The great scientific advancements, the great discoveries have in many cases been taken over by the reactionaries, in the arms race and terrorizing the world through imperialism, all of which does nothing to help the impoverished masses of the planet. Today the imperialists want to conquer and crush us with technological development, based on their control of such research and its results. The U.S. military-industrial complex, for instance, which is about as up-to-date as you can get, utilizes atomic energy, electronics and other branches of science for terror and death.

**GRANMA:** *And if Spanish society, which had to suffer that outrage for so long, did not understand it, how do you think that today’s world can evaluate the new and no less critical usurpation?*

**HART:** They say that Einstein died a sad man. No one can deny his grandeur and his extraordinary talent; his great discoveries were utilized to create nuclear explosions and for other very harmful experiments. Such contradictions exist in history and we must learn from them. I don’t know whether today’s world has a large enough moral conscience and

- 1 Spartacus. Roman slave who led a band of several thousand runaway slaves. They defeated the Roman army a number of times before being massacred in 71 B.C.
- 2 Bartolomé de Las Casas. Spanish priest (1474-1566) who spoke out against the destruction of Indian societies under Spanish domination.
- 3 Francisco Pizarro, Spanish military leader who led the bloody conquest of the Incas of Peru in the 1520s and ’30s.



Brooke Anderson

March in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala in 2008 to demand justice in death and disappearance of family members during escalation of attacks on indigenous communities from 1981-83. Hart says revolutionary gain for humanity from meeting of Europe and the Americas must be viewed apart from ravages of colonial plunder.

enough education to become aware of the magnitude of this phenomenon and to denounce the modern conquerors.

The essence of the problem is that with each scientific achievement in the history of man there is a dramatic dichotomy: the possibility for enormous progress in human liberation, on the one hand, and the interests of the decadent classes, on the other, which use the achievement to maintain their control. This is the lesson we must learn, and

we can gain significant experience from what happened 500 years ago and the centuries that followed.

Medieval obscurantism and reactionary interests in Spain overshadowed the prestige and authority of the great discoveries made by Christopher Columbus. The looting and despoiling of the indigenous peoples had that result and characterized one of the darkest stages in human history.

Of course, there is still much to study

in that process of the conquest and colonization; among other reasons, because the Latin American peoples emerged out of that process. Once some Spaniards reminded me, jokingly, that their forefathers had stayed in Spain and the ones who had perpetrated those savage acts were my forefathers, who came to America.

But I told them that I preferred to think of our forefathers as men like Father Bartolomé de Las Casas. Because it would not be fair to remember the conquistadores; we should remember those who began the struggle against the conquest, against Spanish colonialism. They were the source of the independence movements of Bolívar,<sup>4</sup> of Martí.<sup>5</sup> That’s why I want to remember those who fought that oppression, those who continued later to develop the Americas of today, those who defended the ideals of justice and dignity for all.

- 4 Simón Bolívar, leader of independence struggle which freed six Latin American republics from Spanish rule, from the declaration of Venezuelan independence in 1811 to the liberation in 1825 of what is now Bolivia.
- 5 José Martí. Cuban patriot and martyr (1853–1895) who led Cuba’s struggle for independence from Spain.

## Scientific approach to opening of ‘New World’

BY GEORGE BUCHANAN

The approaching 500th anniversary of the European discovery of the Americas has given rise to a widespread debate on the significance of this event and the colonization of the continent which followed.

In the accompanying interview Cuban minister of culture Armando Hart outlines a materialist approach to this history, explaining the discovery of the Americas as a revolutionary event that “extended human culture into a dimension unknown until that moment.”

The clash between the indigenous societies of the Americas and the social system that was beginning to emerge in Europe in Columbus’s time — capitalism — is discussed in greater depth by George Novack in the article “The Long View of History,” which is contained in his book *Understanding History — Marxist Essays*, published by Pathfinder.

“American history breaks sharply into two fundamentally different epochs,” writes Novack. “One belongs to the aboriginal inhabitants, the Indians; the other starts with the coming of white Europeans to America at the end of the fifteenth century.”

Novack outlines the level of social development of the Indian societies: “Whoever regards the Indians as insignificant or incompetent has defective historical judgment. Humanity has been raised to its present state by four branches of productive activity. The first is food-gathering, which includes grubbing for roots and berries as well as hunting and fishing. The second is stock-raising. The third is agriculture. The fourth is craftsmanship, graduating into large-scale industry.”

The Indians were skillful at hunting, fishing and other methods of food-gathering, he notes. “They were ingenious

craftsmen. ... The Incas, for example, made textiles which were extremely fine in texture, coloring and design. They invented and used more different techniques of weaving on their hand looms than any other people in history.

“However, the Indians showed the greatest talent in their development of agriculture. They may even have independently invented soil cultivation.

“We are indebted to the Indians for most of the vegetables that [we have] today. ... Most important are corn, potatoes and beans, but there is in addition a considerable list including tomatoes, chili, pineapples, peanuts, avocados, and ... tobacco. They knew and used the properties of 400 separate specie of plants. No plant cultivated by the American Indians was known to Asia, Europe or Africa prior to the white invasion of America.

“The introduction of the food plants

taken from the Indians more than doubled the available food supply of the older continent after the fifteenth century and became an important factor in the expansion of capitalist civilization. Over half of the agricultural produce raised in the world today comes from plants domesticated by the Indians!

Novack indicates the high peaks of Indian cultures: “The Incas of the Andes, the Mayans of Guatemala and Yucatan, and the Aztecs of central Mexico, unaffected by European civilization and developed independently, constituted the most advanced of the societies. Their cultures embodied the utmost the Indians were able to accomplish within the twenty-five thousand years or so allotted to them by history.”

“In fact, the Mayans had made mathematical and astronomical calculations more complex and advanced than those

**Continued on page 9**

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How did capitalism arise? Why and when did this exploitative system exhaust its potential to advance civilization? Why is revolutionary change fundamental to human progress? See distributors on page 8 or

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# Che: ‘Moncada attack was beginning of Cuba’s revolution’

Che Guevara Speaks by Ernesto Che Guevara is one of Pathfinder’s Books of the Month for July. Che, born in Argentina, became a central leader of the Cuban Revolution and one of the outstanding communists of the 20th century. The excerpt is from “Socialism and Man in Cuba,” his famous presentation of the tasks and challenges of the working class in transforming itself in struggle to lead the transition to socialism. After its publication in 1965, Che left Cuba to advance new revolutionary battles abroad, leading Cuban and other fighters on internationalist missions in the Congo and then Bolivia. Che Guevara Speaks has been kept continuously in print since Che was wounded, captured by CIA-trained Bolivian army forces on Oct. 8, 1967, and then murdered the following day. Copyright © 2000 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA

[T]he exact date of the beginning of the revolutionary struggle — which would culminate in January 1959 — was July 26, 1953. A group of men led by Fidel Castro attacked the Moncada garrison in Oriente province on the morning of that day. The attack was a failure; the failure became a disaster; and the survivors ended up in prison, beginning the revolutionary struggle

again after they were freed by an amnesty.

In this process, in which there was only the germ of socialism, man was a fundamental factor. We put our trust in him — individual, specific, with a first and last name — and the triumph or failure of the mission entrusted to him depended on his capacity for action.

Then came the stage of guerrilla struggle. It developed in two distinct environments: the people, the still sleeping mass that had to be mobilized; and its vanguard, the guerrillas, the motor force of the mobilization, the generator of revolutionary consciousness and militant enthusiasm. This vanguard was the catalyzing agent that created the subjective conditions necessary for victory.

Here again, in the framework of the proletarianization of our thinking, of this revolution that took place in our habits and our minds, the individual was the basic factor. Every one of the fighters of the Sierra Maestra who reached an upper rank in the revolutionary forces has a record of outstanding deeds to his credit. They attained their rank on this basis. It was the first heroic period, and in it they competed for the heaviest responsibilities, for the greatest dangers, with no other satisfaction than fulfilling a duty.

In our work of revolutionary education we frequently return to this instructive theme. In the attitude of our fighters could be glimpsed the man of the future.

On other occasions in our history the act of total dedication to the revolutionary cause was repeated. During the October [1962 missile] crisis and in the days of Hurricane Flora we saw exceptional deeds of valor and sacrifice performed by an entire people. Finding the method to perpetuate this



Fidel Castro is greeted by thousands of jubilant Cubans as his Freedom Caravan enters Santa Clara, Jan. 6, 1959, on the way to Havana after the revolution led by the July 26 Movement overthrew the U.S.-backed Fulgencio Batista dictatorship.

heroic attitude in daily life is, from the ideological standpoint, one of our fundamental tasks.

In January 1959 the revolutionary government was established with the participation of various members of the treacherous bourgeoisie. The presence of the Rebel Army as the basic element of strength constituted the guarantee of power.

Serious contradictions developed right away. In the first instance, in February 1959, these were resolved when Fidel Castro assumed leadership of the government, taking the post of prime minister. This process culminated in July of the same year with the resignation under mass pressure of President Urrutia.

In the history of the Cuban revolution there now appeared a character, well-defined in its features, who would systematically reappear: the mass.

This multifaceted being is not, as is claimed, the sum of elements of the same type (reduced, moreover, to that same type by the reigning system), which acts like a flock of sheep. It is true that it follows its leaders, basically

Fidel Castro, without hesitation. But the degree to which he won this trust results precisely from having interpreted the people’s desires and aspirations in their full meaning, and from the sincere struggle to fulfill the promises he made.

The mass participated in the agrarian reform and in the difficult task of the administration of state enterprises; it went through the heroic experience of Playa Girón; it was hardened in the battles against various bands of bandits armed by the CIA; it lived through one of the most important decisions of modern times during the October crisis; and today it continues to work for the building of socialism.

Viewed superficially, it might appear that those who speak of the subordination of the individual to the state are right. The mass carries out with matchless enthusiasm and discipline the tasks set by the government, whether in the field of the economy, culture, defense, sports, etc.

The initiative generally comes from Fidel or from the revolutionary high command and is explained to the people, who make it their own. In some cases the party and government take a local experience and generalize it, following the same procedure.

Nevertheless, the state sometimes makes mistakes. When one of these mistakes occurs, one notes a decline in collective enthusiasm due to the effect of a quantitative decrease in each of the elements that make up the mass. Work is paralyzed until it is reduced to insignificant amounts. It is time to make a correction. ...

In this Fidel is a master. His own special way of fusing himself with the people can be appreciated only by seeing him in action. At the great public mass meetings one can observe something like the dialogue of two tuning forks whose vibrations interact, producing new sounds. Fidel and the mass begin to vibrate together in a dialogue of growing intensity until they reach the climax in an abrupt conclusion crowned by our cry of struggle and victory.

The difficult thing to understand for someone not living through the experience of the revolution is this close dialectical unity between the individual and the mass in which both are interrelated and, at the same time, in which the mass, as an aggregate of individuals, interacts with its leaders.

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# Opening of the ‘New World’

Continued from page 9

of the European invaders. They had independently invented the zero for use in their number system — something even the Greeks and Romans had lacked.”

Novack explains that despite these achievements, several major obstacles limited the Indian societies’ ability to advance further. They did not have such important domesticated animals as the horse, cow, pig, sheep or water buffalo that had pulled the Asians and Europeans along toward civilization. “Moreover, they did not use the wheel, except for toys, [and] did not know the use of iron or firearms.”

This stands in contrast with developments in Europe at the time. “While the most advanced Indians had been moving up from wandering hunters’ lives to those of settlers in barbaric communities, the Europeans, themselves an off-spring of Asiatic culture, had not only entered class society but had become highly civilized. Their most progressive segments along the Atlantic seaboard were passing over from feudalism to capitalism.”

Novack looks more closely at the “incompatible levels of social organization” as the “root cause of the enduring and deadly clash” between the Indian and the European societies:

“Even at its height, Indian life was based upon tribal collectivism and its crude technology. The Indians not only did not have the wheel, iron or the alphabet — they also lacked the institutions, ideas, feelings and aims of civilized peoples who had been molded by the technology and culture of an acquisitive society.

“These conditions had stamped out a very special kind of human being as the peculiar product of civilization based on private ownership [to whom] it appeared natural and necessary ... that almost everything on earth should pass into someone’s private ownership. Clothes, houses, weapons of war, tools, ships, even human beings themselves, could be bought and sold.”

“The doctrine of the European whites was that everything must have its price,” Novack writes, “whether it pertains to present happiness or future salvation. This idea remains the guideline for the plutocratic rulers of our day who in their campaigns to dominate the world not only buy up individuals but even whole governments. In their quest for gold and lust for gain, Columbus and the Conquistadors enslaved and killed

thousands of West Indians in the islands they discovered. And that was only the beginning.”

European society was passing from feudalism to capitalism at the time of Columbus. This was not a smooth process, but was accompanied by violent conflicts as the forces of feudalism on the one side and the rising capitalist class on the other wrestled for supremacy.

As Armando Hart notes, one paradoxical result of the Spanish monarchy’s success in colonizing and plundering central and south America was that the development of Spain itself was held back for centuries, while other European nations overtook and displaced Spain as pre-eminent world powers.

The opening of the Americas to European trade and colonization was decisive in those nations for capitalist development, a central part of which was the process Karl Marx called “primitive accumulation” of capital. He described what this entailed in “The Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist”: [*Capital, Volume I*, Chapter 31. Vintage Books, New York, 1977.]

“The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the indigenous population of that continent, the beginnings of the conquest and plunder of India, and the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of black skins, are all things which characterize the dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of primitive accumulation.”

Outlining the history of European colonial plunder throughout the world, Marx comments, “The treatment of the indigenous population was, of course, at its most frightful in plantation-colonies set up exclusively for the export trade, such as the West Indies, and in rich and well-populated countries, such as Mexico and India, that were given over to plunder.

“The colonial system ripened trade and navigation as in a hothouse,” Marx explains. “The colonies provided a market for the budding manufactures, and a vast increase in accumulation which was guaranteed by the mother country’s monopoly of the market. The treasures captured outside Europe by undisguised looting, enslavement and murder flowed back to the mother-country and were turned into capital there.

“The veiled slavery of the wage labourers in Europe,” Marx concludes,



Reproduction of a painting of Genoa, Italy, in 1597, by Cristoforo Grassi. Genoa was a key European port at the time of Columbus’ voyages. Opening of Americas paved the way for the rapid development of capitalism in Holland and England, while holding it back in Spain.

“needed the unqualified slavery of the New World as its pedestal.” All this was necessary “to unleash the ‘eternal natural laws’ of the capitalist mode of production, to complete the process of separation between the workers and the conditions of their labour, to transform, at one pole, the social means of production and subsistence into capital, and at

the opposite pole, the mass of the population into wage-labourers, into the free ‘laboring poor’, that artificial product of modern history.

“If money, according to Auger, ‘comes into the world with a congenital blood-stain on one cheek,’ capital comes dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt.”

## Freedom of speech threatened

Continued from front page

They also point to “an intolerance of opposing views, a vogue for public shaming and ostracism and the tendency to dissolve complex policy issues into a blinding moral certainty.”

*Harper’s* will simultaneously print a counterattack on the “Letter on Justice.” That one is signed by some 160 members of what is called the “publishing community.”

The counterstatement race-baits the letter’s signers, saying many of them are “white, wealthy, and endowed with massive platforms” and “privileged,” as if the color of your skin, accident of birth or commercial success predetermines if your views are correct or not. The counterstatement charges that free speech and open debate are “seductive but nebulous concepts and coded language” that are being used to keep “marginalized voices” from having a “platform.”

Never mind that the letter was spearheaded by Thomas Chatterton Williams, a writer who is Black, as are many of the signers.

The counterstatement backers are especially irked that the letter is signed by J.K. Rowling, author of the *Harry Potter* series. Rowling has come under increasing attack for her feminist views, aimed at destroying her career and livelihood.

The counterstatement signers falsely charge Rowling with “platforming violent anti-trans speakers,” because she spoke out in defense of Maya Forstater, a woman in the U.K. who was fired for stating that there are two sexes, determined by biology. A special target of those pushing the suppression of views is to prevent workers and youth from seeing class battles as the driving force of history and from seeing how working-class consciousness advances through our struggles.

Vox staff writer Emily VanDerWerff complained to the website’s

editors that the signature of fellow staff writer Matthew Yglesias on the Letter on Justice “makes me feel less safe at Vox” — a prod to the bosses to go after him.

**Attacks from free speech opponents**

These are not hypothetical threats. In early June *New York Times* editorial page editor James Bennet was forced to resign for running a column by Republican Sen. Tom Cotton that fell foul of the strictures imposed by liberals who manage the paper.

Last month Henry Bienen and Willard Bunn, president and board chairman of the Poet’s Foundation, were forced to resign for issuing a short note expressing “solidarity with the Black community” after cops killed George Floyd in Minneapolis. Some 1,800 “poets,” “readers,” “award recipients” and others signed a statement charging that “the watery vagaries of this statement are, ultimately, a violence” against Blacks.

Workers and our unions need to fight tenaciously whenever bosses — or the political correctness police — use thought control measures to throw any worker out of a job, regardless of whether we agree with their opinions. As the class struggle heats up, bosses will increasingly try to muzzle militant workers for speaking out about the impact of the capitalist crisis on our lives — as they have done in the past.

Working people and youth have a right to consider competing viewpoints, to think for ourselves and express our own views without being threatened with losing our livelihoods by those who claim they know what is in our best interest. We need to jealously guard the right to free speech because we need *more* discussion and debate, not less, to forge political clarity on the way forward to strengthen the unity and fighting capacity of the working class.

## We are heirs of the world’s revolutions

Revolutionaries in Burkina Faso wish to be heirs of all the world’s revolutions. We draw the lessons of the American Revolution, the lessons of its victory over colonial domination and the consequences of that victory. We adopt as our own the affirmation of the Doctrine whereby Europeans must not intervene in American affairs, nor Americans in European affairs. Just as [U.S. President James] Monroe proclaimed “America to the Americans” in 1823, we echo this today by saying “Africa to the Africans,” “Burkina to the Burkinabè.”

The French Revolution of 1789, which overturned the foundations of absolutism, taught us the connection between the rights of man and the rights of peoples to liberty. The great revolution of October 1917 [in Russia] transformed the world, brought victory to the proletariat, shook the foundations of capitalism, and made possible the Paris Commune’s dreams of justice.

— Thomas Sankara at the UN, 1984

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